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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the current inability to attain certain goals in higher education, then offers a few suggestions for increases in accountability and coordination. Emphasis is placed on education's social goals, socialization of the young, changes in higher education, autonomous campus units, lack of academic objectives and priorities for the attainment of goals, departments and stability, new faculty, control vs. responsibility, faculty accountability, and bargaining and accountability. (MJM)

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Accountability: Still Another Viewpoint

In an article, "Higher Education and Social Responsibility," published in last October's *Planning for Higher Education*, Michael A. Murray, assistant professor, Department of Political Science and Institute of Governmental Affairs, Chicago Circle Campus, University of Illinois, took issue with Paul Dressel's recent book, ***Return to Responsibility***,[1] and its call for greater social responsibility on the part of colleges and universities. Professor Murray's arguments now have prompted still another assessment of the problem, this one by Philip M. Marcus, professor of sociology at Michigan State University, who collaborated in the preparation of ***Return to Responsibility*** and has conducted numerous studies of professionals and the organizations in which they work. Professor Marcus' views follow.

In the past, many college and university administrators provided insight and understanding about academic governance based upon personal observations and experience. Since 1965, many students have contributed their views about academic problems. Their sundry entreaties focused upon better teaching, redress of social grievances, relevancy of course material, and increased participation in university governance. Both administrators and students have been studied intensively and statistics reflecting the perceptions of these two groups abound. But surprisingly few faculty have set down their perspectives, even though their participation in university reform has been noteworthy. Perhaps this oversight reflects the detached intellectual stance of the scholarly professor, the impartial, disinterested camera, as Isherwood describes him, with open shutter, seeing all, and hoping to develop the material only later. However, time is costly during long periods of sterile drift. The current budgetary crisis has caught many schools unprepared and they flounder in *ad hoc* adjustments. Policy must be developed for a decade and not merely for the next alumni dinner or legislative committee meeting. This paper offers a faculty perspective, a view from the middle of current problems, and steps to solve a few of them.

In his recent article, Professor Murray raised a number of important issues while reviewing *Return to Responsibility*. Contending that the book "contains little in the way of redeeming value," Murray argued that Dressel *et al.* have become the leaders of a new activism to decrease academic freedom while promoting efficient coordination. This paper does not attempt to defend Dressel (he can take care of himself quite notably) or to carp at Murray. The issues Murray raised, however, demand examination in a larger context than his review permitted.

Murray did not describe how the process of coordination would lead to decreased academic freedom. Nor did he show how his own substitute for coordination—accountability—could be achieved. This paper examines the current inability to attain certain goals in higher education, then offers a few suggestions for increases in both accountability and coordination. Too often, academic critics have established impossible goals, avoided concrete problems, and bewailed the fates that destroy the Edens. These idealistic transplants, wanting a change of heart, decry specific solutions as mere bandaids. Given the extent of today's wounds, a strip of adhesive seems more valuable than mystic tape.

EDUCATION'S SOCIAL GOALS

Every writer had his own pet goals for education. Surely, all can agree that two of those goals are the creation of new knowledge and the transmission of the best of existing culture. Scholarly research implies much more than the mere examination of existing materials or the search for new data. Knowledge must be communicated to others or it remains mysticism. Contrary to popular slogans, "publish or perish" refers more to knowledge than to scholars' careers. Only in a usable, written format can knowledge be studied, reflected upon, and evaluated. (The spoken word, existing only in an emphemeral state, precludes systematic consideration.) Hence, the publication and dissemination of knowledge

is almost equal in importance to discovery.

The second major goal—the transmission of the best of existing culture—is attained through teaching. Transmission of the *best* of existing culture means that the faculty acts as a sieve, extracting that which currently is most useful from that which probably will have little value for coming generations. Thus, teaching is more than the mere repetition of the current state of knowledge, more than a capitulation to current fad. Existing materials must be reformulated into a heuristic package for students.

A third major goal is the attack on social problems, a goal that received undue attention when students demanded something called "relevancy" in their programs. However, professional schools always have trained students for an attack on social problems. Agricultural schools conducted research, taught, and then disseminated information to a large segment of the farm population in order that production be increased. Schools of business, education, and public health have had their special clientele. The cry for relevance, then, applies only to a small segment of the university, in which students have tried to force a few relatively reluctant disciplines to use their existing facilities in the attack on current social problems.

SOCIALIZATION OF THE YOUNG

A fourth goal is broadly defined as the socialization of the young into adult, middle-class roles. The development of certain professional or technical competencies represents only one aspect of this goal because the average middle-class job, as well as life style, involves handling specific configurations of emotion, behaving in ways that are not taught either in the home or in the secondary schools. For example, most middle-class jobs require the use of internalized criteria for the evaluation of one's own performance. In the absence of specific data, one often develops anxiety about one's competency. College experience provides opportunities to learn techniques for controlling anxiety. Other examples of adult socialization include the inculcation of standards toward the arts, toward other people and occupations, and toward family life and the responsibilities of citizenship.

The socialization goal permits the university to confer credentials, certifying for other segments of society that students are qualified to perform adult functions. A large proportion of our student population now demand certification and have no other interest in scholarship. They are reluctant participants, kept out of the labor force because of a desire to better or retain their social status. With both parents and employers absent, the university is the only mechanism of social control available. Students resist this aspect of the university, administrators avoid the responsibility, and faculty deny the existence of the problem.

CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The tremendous increase in the number of students has caused a rapid expansion of facilities without a concurrent modification of administrative structure. In 1910, approximately 355,000 students were in college, representing approximately 3 per cent of the 18-to-24 age group. By 1970, there were approximately 5 million students, or 25 per cent of the college-age population. In short, not only has the actual number of persons attending college increased, but so has the demand for a college education among young adults.

The increases placed pressure on the existing educational establishment to increase the number of faculty and ancillary personnel. In most cases, the shortage of faculty was acute. Qualified and competent scholars could not be developed and educated overnight. Years were required to meet the rapidly expanding demand. The shortage enhanced faculty mobility as competent personnel left to fill vacancies at both expanding and emerging institutions or to obtain jobs within government and industry.

Another change has been the increase in number, but not necessarily percentage, of college and university administrators. Most were poorly trained for their positions, because those groomed for the jobs often did not fill them when the vacancies arose. Higher education experienced a transition from a time when top scholars became presidents or deans, to a need for administrators with contacts in the federal agencies or foundations, to a hope that those chosen could mediate conflict. Only the rare administrator could survive these major shifts. Turnover has been high as many prodigals returned to the warmth of the departmental womb.

A fourth major change has been the increase, until recently, in allocations of federal and state funds for higher education. Over the past two decades, the state university system has emerged as a major factor in education, a development that could not have been predicted during the first half of the century. Today, state universities spend approximately $4 billion a year on their university systems. When we add this amount to federal expenditures of $3.5 billion for education and another $4.5 billion for research, we can see how support has shifted away from the private donor and the fund-raising activities of institutional boards. The distinction between public and private university has vanished and legislatures and granting agencies demand

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an accountability greater than naming the corner of the library in honor of a donor.

THE VACUUM WITHIN

The provision of federal and state funds, along with increased demand for college experience, means that higher education no longer involves the training of an elite but has become democratic. Many expected to go to college as the opportunity became available. Few questioned whether most people wanted, needed, or were equipped to handle advanced training. Thus, higher education became a new behemoth, attended by large numbers of indifferent students, taught by a relatively understaffed faculty, guided by unprepared administrators. Or, to paraphrase Dos Passos, universities were like the Magdenburg spheres: the pressure without sustained the vacuum within

Still another factor was the expansion of research activities and their active competition with the goals of teaching and socialization. Competition with the Communist world, demands placed on our production machinery, and the emergence of a service sector requiring new knowledge and different training for its personnel, gave rise to a number of new research activities on the campuses. Institutes and centers, competing with the departments, created centrifugal forces within the total university. Outside funds gave the new units bargaining power vis-a-vis the central administration, eroding central control over them. Non-teaching personnel filling positions in these units and not attached to departments had little accountability to either the chairman or the peer group so long as the grants flowed easily. Often, faculty in traditional departments obtained part- or full-time appointments in the institutes and centers. Indeed, universities often promised part-time research appointments as a lure to new faculty. The independence offered by these relatively autonomous campus units became the model for the entire faculty.

The problems have been compounded over the past decade by a tendency to question established criteria for student admissions. The very standards of excellence which had guided decisions for generations were disputed. (I do not argue that these standards of excellence, these criteria for evaluation, should not have been questioned, but merely that many were destroyed in the process and no adequate replacements provided.) Some pressures for re-evaluation came, justifiably, from minority groups, who recognized that many testing procedures involve inherent biases. Many other students, sympathizing with the minority cause and themselves subjected to invidious evaluations, echoed the criticism Some faculty, vulnerable if their own teaching was sometimes neglected in favor of research, remained passive. Others, who considered themselves primarily as teachers, often felt penalized in comparison to their publishing colleagues. And still another group, the inept who profited by the expanding academic marketplace, formed coalitions with the new, self-righteous Philistines. To be sure, these different groups added up to a formidable coalition against a weak and unprepared administration.

THE CITADEL OF PETULANCE

The blurring of academic standards, the increase in outside funds, and the expansion of campus facilities, led to faculty competition in the reallocation of resources. But both faculty and administrators consistently refused to develop standards for the evaluation of activities or for priorities for the attainment of goals. As a result, most faculty today are hopelessly entrapped in arguments that attempt to establish and justify the primacy of their respective academic styles. The community of scholars has become the Tower of Babel, the citadel of petulance.

Finally, the oft-proclaimed expansion and diffusion of knowledge encouraged faculty to delimit their purviews and increased the difficulty in explaining any one area of competency to others, even within one's own department. Peer control decreased when it became impossible to evaluate the performance of others. Thus, as line power in the administrative hierarchy has decreased due to outside funding and personnel shortages, so has collegial control over professorial accountability.

To a large extent, student uprisings over the past decade may be attributed to the structural vacuum in colleges and universities created by external changes. Irrespective of the slogans and rationalizations offered for student disruptions—the neuroses caused by permissive child-rearing, the war in Southeast Asia, the inhumane academic bureaucracy—the fact remains that the most severe disruptions occurred at schools similar to those depicted above. Many colleges and universities, lacking adjustment mechanisms to handle student concerns, relied upon academic amulets and round-table communication to solve problems.

DEPARTMENTS AND STABILITY

Through all the changes noted above, academic departments grew relatively stronger than university administrations, which were trying to cope with general problems and attain overall goals. Unprepared administrators genuflected before those social-science priests advocating decentralization, the ideologues of the so-called human relations school who sought fewer constraints to teach large classes, do administrative work, and provide service to the university. Proclaiming loudly that less control from the top would mean higher productivity and stability throughout all organizations, the neo-Lewinian necromancers averred that peer and colleague control would deter charlatans, encourage and reward truth, and retain maximum autonomy, individuality, and independent intellectual pursuits. However, due to intensive specialization, low job visibility, and outside research funds, peers could not control each other and colleague accountability became a set of

shibboleths to ward off the bedeviled dean.

Other factors supported the department as a source of strength and stability during this period of social change. Tenure is deeply rooted in the university system and anchored in the department. Research personnel hired by institutes and centers could not obtain tenure except through a department. Thus, it behooved the institutes and centers to cooperate as much as possible with existing departments in order to recruit researchers and students and to obtain tenure for their own members. Research units, competing with each other for funds and recognition, often formed coalitions with certain departments to strengthen their organizational position.

Selection of administrators often was limited to the departments, when positions such as chairman or dean were being filled. New appointees supervised ex-colleagues and, if the job was not to one's liking, rules of tenure required departments to readmit the reformed prodigal. That prospect greatly inhibited administrators from adopting a strong stance vis-a-vis subordinates.

Traditionally, departments provided social support by sharing symbols of identity and relative homogeneity, facing similar problems, discussing common enemies and heroes, joining the same professional associations, and reading scholarly house organs. Group cohesion, based on social support, encouraged faculty to relinquish responsibility for peer control. Specialization made peer evaluation difficult and split reasonable individuals into intellectual camps. Thus the need for unity was counterbalanced, often vitiated, by abstract professional concerns. In order to accomplish the mundane chores of integrating courses into programs, easing time-consuming hostilities, attending to such undesirable tasks as admissions and library committees, time scheduling, and the like, a tacit understanding arose among faculty to *not* exercise peer control, *not* censure, and *not* deprive others of available rewards and facilities. Petty intrigue substituted for rational deliberation of policy and responsibility.

Graduate schools and professional associations also buttressed departments against the central administration and the acceptance of responsibility. Minimal standards of competency usually were set by these associations and schools. Departments that did not meet standards were stigmatized as bad places to work, negatively affecting recruiting, the placement of students, the ability to retain competent faculty, and a department's prestige and national bargaining power. Faced with threats of informal condemnation, departments demanded autonomy to act without administrative review or concern for institutional needs.

THE NEW FACULTY

New faculty members, in particular, were heavily identified with their respective professions, knew little about university needs, and, accordingly, sought a cosmopolitan source for points of reference by which to guide their behavior. Socialized to abstract principles in their respective fields, away from their graduate friends and surrounded by new colleagues, anxious about job security, possible fame, and professional acceptance, novitiates turned to the national associations for standards of behavior, guidelines for performance, and a reference group for self-evaluation. Thus, new faculty were usually the least amenable to specific university needs and focused primarily on abstract slogans. The current myth that young faculty are well-springs of change usually neglects to specify the kinds of change advocated.

Finally, the large grants of outside money channeled through the departments to individuals placed a large share of the payroll outside the purview of the university administration. Peripatetic faculty, their grants attached, could attract other job offers and often intimidated the central administration.

Departments, then, became sharply delineated, relatively stronger, and provided faculty a measure of stability in the administrative structural vacuum. Concurrently, the explosion of knowledge and the rapidly growing service economy required integrated student programs and additional departmental service to the university. However, effective coordination seldom was available.

Social demands were not to be denied: the emerging professional schools of education, social work, and counseling required psychology and sociology programs in order to offer a total education. Schools of agriculture and home economics rapidly became involved in conservation movements, ecology, urban migration, and family dynamics. Prestigious authors like C.P. Snow called upon all to learn statistics, math, and science in order to become responsible citizens. Even medical schools, those bastions of self-contained professional expertise, discovered that the social sciences were necessary if the needs of urban patients were to be served and the complex organizational structures in which salaried professionals now work understood.

The department replaced the tyranny of the board and central administration with the tyranny of competing peer specialists. Power at the departmental level, with few checks and little review by the central administration, would not present a problem within the total academic structure if the goals of both department and university were similar and explicit. But they were not. To make matters worse, departments lacked criteria and perspective to make many decisions. Private greed did not always lead to public good and the marketplace was not an efficient mechanism for the formation of administrative policy. The degeneration of authority has not been offset by alternative mechanisms for coordination and control of anarchy.

CONTROL VS. RESPONSIBILITY

Professor Murray asserted that increased efforts to coordinate and control would hamper academic freedom and not enhance accountability. This paper contends

that educational goals are not being met because weak administrations cannot control departments and integrate faculty into programs. Planning suffers when sub-parts cannot be coordinated and do not act in a predictable fashion. To overcome these handicaps, central administrators must initiate positive actions and not remain passive, awaiting random student and faculty onslaughts. Only through the combined efforts of all three groups can academia set policies and attain goals. Currently, administrators have abnegated themselves to the deterioration of authority. This is not to advocate strong, central control but merely to urge that administrators try to recoup their losses and become responsible members of the academic community.

Top administrators first must admit their pusillanimous withdrawal from concrete policy-making and planning. Ideological slogans must be quashed as university priorities are set and many unwarranted, even if popular, programs scuttled. (For some schools, research and/or service to the community will receive little support.) Priorities must be publicly avowed and steps taken to reward those activities assigned top consideration. Too often, rewards in education are inconsistent with priorities or, lacking explicit criteria, apparently randomly distributed.

Most administrators fail to enforce decisions and prefer to issue pleas for cooperation rather than establish follow-through procedures. For example, if a school elects to strengthen its humanities teaching component, then English departments that cavalierly delegate undergraduate instruction to graduate students should suffer cuts in funds for salary increases. Similarly, if research has a high priority, the department must demonstrate that the faculty are writing, publishing, and seeking external financial support.

Faculty resist the imposition of criteria for research and teaching and offer many spurious and tedious arguments against them. While a few seminal thinkers may have problems in getting published, most faculty can find outlets in the myriad of journals in each field. Major intellectual breakthroughs are rare, even though the myth is perpetuated by those of us who require rationalizations for rejection slips.

FACULTY ACCOUNTABILITY

Teaching criteria are more complicated than research competency. The first objective should be to weed out the bad before rewarding the best. Student evaluations, if consistently made public, help constrain the totally inept. Faculty committees should review all student evaluations. In universities, graduate assistants also should provide commentary on course content and presentation. When multiple sections of a course are offered, departmental examinations should be employed in determining final grades. Student scores in a series of such examinations will reflect the quality of instruction. Each instructor should provide the responsible departmental committee with a detailed evaluation of his course, its concrete objectives, and justification of the procedures employed to obtain those ends. These are but the first steps in establishing teaching standards; they should be linked to the reward structure.

The sanctity of the large class is a false issue. Persons unknown to instructors attend lectures and often bring tape recorders; many professors are seen on television throughout the campus. Why should periodic visits by peers offend moral sensibilities? (Evaluation of small classes is complicated and cannot be discussed here.)

Faculty accountability is possible only after we know how time is spent. Each department must determine the number of hours devoted to teaching, committee meetings, research, counseling, and the like. Tasks then can be assigned after consultation with faculty. For example, chairmen should identify individuals capable of filling departmental needs and reward them accordingly. If a faculty member wishes to perform administrative functions for the department, he should be rewarded for his accomplishments and not penalized for limited publication. The point, simply, is to set priorities, identify the faculty who can accomplish specific goals, and reward those who perform. At present, we assume that all faculty will perform equally in most areas.

The goal-attainment machinery must provide the faculty with an opportunity to participate in setting standards and determining criteria for evaluation. The task of administrators is to enforce the criteria and differentially reward performance. Should faculty adamantly refuse to participate, then, and only then, should administrators set performance standards. To protect faculty against arbitrary fads and whim, university-wide grievance procedures must be established. Civil liberties and just evaluations must be guarded from the capricious administrator and the tyrannical faculty.

Outside evaluators from the respective disciplines should be employed when promotions are under consideration. Researchers are relatively easy to assess but contributions to teaching require special consideration. Detailed course outlines and lecture notes are invaluable to careful evaluation procedures.

BARGAINING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Administrators have attempted to dissuade faculty from joining collective negotiating organizations. However, apprehensions can be reduced if administrators insist that negotiations include standards of performance and productivity as well as salaries and job security. Most academic negotiations have avoided this issue, thereby missing an excellent opportunity to set standards of performance in a binding contract. A negotiable contract has the advantage of specifying concrete obligations and deprives the informal work group of its powers to set and enforce vague criteria which often are antithetical to academic excellence. Change is also possible, since specific clauses can be renegotiated if found unworkable.

These modest suggestions represent examples that will help in controlling departments and insuring their

integration into the total university. Faculty accountability can be assessed and performance rewarded accordingly. Rights can be protected without adherence to slogans that preclude responsibility. Only by the restructuring of the administrative contribution to university operations can higher education attain its goals.

Philip M. Marcus

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[1] Return to Responsibility was written in collaboration with William H. Faricy and with the assistance of Professor Marcus and F. Craig Johnson. It was published in 1972 by Jossey-Bass, Inc., San Francisco.